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NATURE, STATUS AND SCOPE OF MANPOWER AND EMPLOYMENT PLANNING PROCESSES IN AFRICA

(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

The Nature, Status and Scope of Manpower and Employment Planning Processes in Africa

Executive Summary

I. Introduction

1. Several analysis of economic development trends in Africa during the last decade show that the performance of African economies, by and large, had been sluggish. Among the major contributing factors to this state of sluggishness are: (i) the inadequacy and poor condition of Africa's transport and communication infrastructure; (ii) Africa's incapability to adequately exploit, process and utilize, in an integrated manner, her vast reserves of natural resources, and (iii) a diminishing trend in capital growth with a growing financial leakage both of which give rise to huge payment deficits and the accumulation of foreign debt. A careful analysis of these contributing factors raises doubts on the appropriateness of the region's policies, strategies, programmes and attitudes toward the developemnt and utilization of its vast human resources potentials for developemnt.

2. This notwithstanding, a number of African Governments have instituted actions, ranging from the creation of ministries, departments or units for dealing with human resources management, to the conduct of reviews and studies on the status of human resources in their respective countries, and the formulation of regional strategies in their search of optimum ways of ensuring an efficient human resources development and utilization process so as to realize their desire for economic recovery and developemnt. This report reviews the nature and status of these efforts particularly, as they relate to human resources planning activities and programmes in Africa at the macro-level and highlights their scope for future action with the view to assisting member States in their efforts to place the human factor in its rightful cell within their respective economic and social recovery and self-sustained development strategy.

II. Major Observations for Consideration

3. It should be noted at the outset that though commendable, most of the efforts made toward improving the process of manpower and employment planning in Africa fall short of the required orientation, framework and support that could ensure a more permanent solution to the ill-management of Africa's resource flows and utilization.

4. Three other major observations on the process which has greater relevance for Africa's recovery and long-term development need to be single out. First, there is a growing need for a comprehensive human resources planning sub-system. But to be effective, the system should be placed within the context and framework of the Lagos Plan of Action, (LPA), Africa Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, (APPER), and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD). These action programmes addressed themselves principally to achieving a breakthrough in structural transformation with emphasis placed on food and agriculture, industry, human resources, science and technology, transport and communications, trade and finance.

Needless to say, the achievement of this breakthrough would, to a larger extent, require adequate investments in human resources development at all levels. Such investments should be allocated and managed within the prospects of present development challenges and shifting priorities as conceived in the LPA and elaborated upon in APPEP and UN-PAAERD. In addition, they would need to be focused on new challenges and strategies that would have resulted from the implementation of Africa's recovery programmes between now and 1990. It is by so doing, that one can ensure an integrated process and machinery, both comprehensive in nature, approach and scope with the sole objective of fostering Africa's long-term economic and social development.

5. Second, problems associated with data collection, processing and analysis and those associated with policy formulation and administration have seriously constrained the achievements of the many efforts made by member States' Governments to strengthen human rsources management institutions in the last five years. For example, difficulties exist in identifying the type of required data; conceptualizing and finding operational definition for basic labour force and labour market concepts such as employment, unemployment, underemployment, productivity, work, etc.; and conceiving, planning, designing, conducting and processing manpower surveys. On the other hand, the region as a whole, suffers from a state of poor management and poor policy planning due primarily to the disintegrated and unsystematic approach used for policy formulation and administration. The result of this has not only constrained manpower developemnt and utilization planning and programming processes in Africa, but has also made mockery of socio-economic development planning in many African countries.

6. With regards to the former, the process suffers specifically from three limitations as a result of this poor state of policy planning and managemet: (i) policies in Africa are generally not forceful on issues of efficiency and equity of development and thereby limits the development potentials of the process; (ii) the process suffers from a situation where enunciated policies are unclear about manpower planning and programming objectives, expected outputs and institutional responsibilities; (iii) the process suffers from the lack of adequate capacity to deal with the issues of urban unemployment, wages, investments, educational facilities, and the size and living conditions of the labour force primarily because manpower policy planning in the region is often limited in scope with little thoughts given to policies and problems relating to these human dimension issues.

7. The third and final observation relates to the structure and effectiveness of national institutional arrangements for human resources planning, and the type and nature of human resources planning activities undertaken in the region. The review shows that for the most part, member States have made modest gains towards evolving an institutional framework for strengthening their respective capabilities for human resources planning. In addition, member States have undertaken a number of associated activities in the form of policy revision and reforms, training workshops/seminars/conferences. studies and surveys.

8. These gains and efforts could have made greater markes, but for a number of impediments, some of which are common to many African countries. For example, the process often lacks effective linkages and co-ordination in the

activities of the various organs responsible directly or indirectly for the planning and programming of manpower and its utilization. More often than not, sectoral organs, which should have been complementary in nature, do adopt inward looking approaches in their activities with little or no reference made to the activities of national primary organs responsible for manpower and employment policy formulation and planning. Technical inadequacies relating to the application of the "state of the art" of manpower and employment planning, those related to the derivation of a conclusive conceptual framework for human resources management within the context of Africa development profile, needs and objectives have also made modest the gain from national efforts. These and other impendiments will have to be redressed if the process of human resources management is to be made more effective.

III Conclusions and Policy Implications

9. What emerges from above with regards to the nature, status and scope of human resources planning and programming in Africa is an encouraging picture. In the first instance the need to establish appropriate institutional arrangements to administer the process for ensuring national development seems to have been felt by African governments. Additionally, though much work is yet to be done, an institutional and operational framework for an overall human resources management system has begun to evolve in many African States. Given this encouraging picture, and given the presence of a series of constraining factors, which could hinder the process, two major conclusions could be drawn.

10. First and foremost, efforts made so far at improving human resources management in Africa would need to be integrated, intensified and sustained on a systematic basis within the context of national and regional development. This would not only call for the designing of appropriate human resources planning and programming packages that contain consistent goals and objectives along side with clear statements on the steps, programmes and techiques required for initiating and implementing those goals and strategies, but also call for sound institutional and staffing capabilities to deliver the outputs. Secondly, more concrete steps will have to be taken at the national level to broaden the scope and relevancy of manpower and employment planning and programming. This would begin with ensuring an effective process for human resources policy planning, policy formulation and policy implementation within the framework, objectives and strategies of other development policies. Next, it would require greater co-operation between member States within the region and between the region and the international community within the spirit of APPER and UN-PAAPED.

In the light of the above conclusions, it stands to reason for one to suggest that immediate action would need to be taken where necessary with the view to ensuring that national manPower and employment planning and programming exercises are re-inforced by clear national statements on the steps, strategies and techniques for initiating and implementing human resources management activities. Accordingly, three specific suggestions with far reaching policy implications, are made:

(i) National and regional efforts made so far towards the establishment of the required institutional arrangements will have to be sustained and intensified;

(ii) specific policies with respect to manpower and employment planning and programming as well as to the strengthening of manpower management institutional structures, interrelationships and linkages within the aggregate development planning system, will have to be clearly stated and vigorously pursued;

(iii) steps will have to be taken to ensure managerial, professional and operational capabilities within the created institutions with emphasis placed on the specification of clear and measurable work programme together with unit terms of references; the initiation of staff development and utilization policies and programmes; and the administration and periodic evaluation of such policies and programmes.